

Analysis of Historical Dress Towards Expanding Opportunities for Ornamentation in Menswear through Digital Knitting Practices

Finn Godbolt

Auckland University of Technology, finn.godbolt@aut.ac.nz

ABSTRACT

This research considers how historical events in Western Europe between the 17th to the 20th centuries impacted textile aesthetics resulting in the limited use of colour, texture, and silhouette in contemporary menswear, notably compared to the aesthetic variety of textiles in womenswear.

A review of the *ebbs* and *flows* of historical menswear reveals a range of significant historical influences that govern silhouettes and materials. Specifically, this work analyses how various social transformations contributed to a consistent rejection and reoccurrence of highly ornate and expressive male clothing. These include the impact of class systems during the French Revolution and technological advancements in the Industrial Revolution. Next, the “Great Male Renunciation” marks the first documented response to both revolutions, presenting a strategy against minimalist and uniform aesthetics in menswear. These events represent critical points in the history of textiles, where men opted for clothing that prioritises functionality, uniformity, and subtlety.

Understanding historical contexts that govern menswear aesthetics reflects a crucial underpinning of adornment as a key aspect of menswear aesthetics despite limited commonality in modern design. This research paper considers how digital knitting technologies can inspire a revival of ornamental and decorative potentials in menswear textiles, with a range of practice outcomes proposing novel methods of designing historical garments and features.

Keywords: Ornamentation, Knitting, Expression, Menswear, Technology, Craft.

INTRODUCTION

Elaborate ornamentation was once a key feature of menswear, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries. During this time, decorative textiles were commonplace in men's fashion. Cycles of rejecting and embracing ornamentation reveal a complex history shaped by many socioeconomic factors. McCall (2018) underscores the complexity and cultural significance of ornamentation and adornment during this time, noting, "Ornamentation and adornment—both imaginative explorations of their

representational ideologies and historicist reconstructions... have profitably commanded the attention of historians attuned to the materiality and cultural significance..." (McCall, 2019, p.1453).

As described in in *Refashioning Men* "...the western fashion system goes hand-in-hand with the exercise of power" (Shannon, 2004, p.10). Fashion scholars frequently explore the origins of sartorial trends to understand how past societies influence modern design. This paper continues the same scholarly approach, reinterpret aspects of historically significant design through a contemporary lens. It envisions a revival of ornamental and decorative features in menswear, communicating a narrative of styles that were once integral to male fashion. Discussions within the literature review examine influences of three significant cultural shifts: political and social structures during the French Revolution, technological advancements during the Industrial Revolution, and evolving concepts of identity during the Great Male Renunciation.

To explore how these themes have shaped male clothing, the paper uses the terms *ebbs* and *flows* to describe contrasting ends of the aesthetic spectrum — ebbs representing minimalist, functional clothing, and flows symbolising excess in appearance, cost, and expressiveness. The practice supporting this research interprets the three key revolutions discussed contexts can inform and advance digital knitting practices, presented through a range of novel design concepts. It engages with potential future clothing designs that honour historical influences while incorporating evolving technologies and manufacturing processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

French Revolution

The period leading up to the French Revolution offers key insights into a shifting landscape of socioeconomic conditions and political powers that eventually shaped a significant change in Western fashion trends. Until the 17th century, Europe maintained a strong attachment to Renaissance aesthetics - gradually transitioning from Gothic to Tudor and Elizabethan styles (McCall, 2019, p.1449). Portraits from this era are characterised by the flow of luxurious styles for the wealthy (Hollander, 2019), including bejewelled textiles, rare fabrics, ornate accessories, doublets coats, corsets and military-inspired slashed sleeves. In contrast, an ebb of limited access to such decorative styles for a majority of the population highlights a central theme in sartorial inequality discussed across the following text.

When Louis XIV came to the throne in 1643, most luxury goods, including silks, jewellery and furniture, were imported from surrounding European countries (Berg, 2007, p.52). Louis XIV, alongside his finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, profoundly transformed the fashion industry during his reign by recognising fashion's

potential as a tool of propaganda and economic growth (Mansel, 2006). The significance of dress during this time is highlighted in *The Face of Fashion* by Craik (1993) when discussing Louis XIV's levée (getting up ritual):

... the French system of etiquette is pertinent to understanding how the relations between bodies, clothes and habitus operate... Household staff, courtiers, family members and others seeking favour visited the king during the process of his getting up and dressing... His political regime was built on allegiance to the habitus of his body (Craik, 1993, p.25).

Louis XIV leveraged strict, evolving dress codes to control and politically influence nobles by indebting them through loans. He introduced bi-annual fashion cycles, establishing the first documented seasons to promote French fashion using engraved plates distributed domestically and abroad. Moreover, by banning imported textiles, Louis XIV further bolstered France's economic and political dominance in fashion (Lesso, 2020). The strategic positioning made France an epicentre of style and luxury, establishing thriving local industries where, at one point, approximately one-third of Parisian wage earners were employed in the clothing and textile trades (Tilburg, 2019, p.156).

Aristocrats displayed a flow of opulence, extravagance and meticulous attention to detail to differentiate their status from the working-class. Form-fitting corsets and tailored doublets contrasted against voluminous farthingales and cloaks, boasting access to fine and expensive textiles. Luxurious brocade fabrics were layered amongst ornate ruffles, lace, rosettes, pom-poms, bows and meticulously hand-crafted golden embroideries. Decadently decorated garments were generally reserved for royalty, often using large volumes of silk, velvet and fur (Rashad, 2023, p.133). Men's fashions typically consisted of long, fitted justaucorps, silk breeches, lace cravats, elaborate wigs, feather-adorned hats and red-soled high-heels first popularised by Louis XIV, seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Rigaud, H. (ca. 1701). *Portrait of Louis XIV* [Oil on Canvas]. The J. Paul Getty Museum Collection. <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103RA8>

During Louis XIV's reign, elaborate social frameworks perpetuated stark lifestyle disparities between class systems. The emerging middle-class, known as the bourgeoisie, played a significant role in challenging aristocratic structures dominating French society (Lillrank, 2012, p.9). At the same time, the emergence of seasonal fashion cycles, the growing influence of global trade and advancements in pre-industrial textile machinery supported a shift towards simpler and more functional designs.

Economic constraints limited lower and emerging middle classes from accessing luxuries enjoyed by the aristocracy, with fashion serving as a vivid example of upper-class indulgences. While noblemen continued to embrace opulent appearances, lower-class attire featured undyed linens and cotton, with loose, unshaped silhouettes to minimise fabric waste and avoid costly tailoring, reflecting an ebb of prioritising practicality and necessities over extravagance (Figure 2). A significant sartorial shift can be seen in the gradual decline of elaborate ruffled collars. Once a ubiquitous feature across social classes, ruffs became more extensive and more impractical, with simpler 'band' style necklines gaining popularity in France and England. This move towards practicality resonated with the working-class and aligned with the broader cultural preference for functionality over excess (Werlin, 2017).



Figure 2. Le Nain, A. (ca. 1640-48). *A Peasant Family* [Oil on Copper]. The Metropolitan Museum. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438779>

Regional attitudes to clothing varied greatly. The flamboyant characteristics of French attire, particularly eccentric and gender-bending Macaroni fashion, was largely ridiculed by the British prior to the French Revolution. This is evidenced in the widespread publication of satirical illustrations, pictured in Figure 3, which can be seen as a formative influence towards cultural rivalries, political satire, and changing societal values, all of which contributed to a broader critique of the excessive ornamentation.



Figure 3. Grim, S. H. (1774). 'Is this my Daughter Ann?' [Watercolour Print]. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1081204001>

Louis XIV's reign solidified France's position as a dominant European power, but extravagant spending on wars and luxury ultimately strained the nation's finances forming sentiments of resentment amongst the working-class. His successor Louis XVI, facing mounting debt and resistance from the nobility, failed to address the financial crisis effectively (Doyle, 2001). An inability to implement necessary reforms, coupled with the rise of Enlightenment ideals, played a significant role in precipitating the French Revolution and his subsequent execution in 1793 (Hunt, 2004). Censer describes, "Thus, politics and circumstances led to a radical division in which the nobility and the king ended up as the opponents of republican morality" (Censer, 2019, p.549).

After the French Revolution, egalitarian ideals of modesty and equality were reflected in fashion (Olah, 2021). Accessible to all classes, simplified, minimalist designs replaced lavish and decorative garments, marking a societal shift toward modesty and rejecting unnecessary ornamental textiles (Assailly, 1968). Revolutionaries adopted smocking as a symbol of revolutionary ideals embodying labour, simplicity, and equality (Bendall, 2018). Red became the colour of the resistance, representing a break from the old regime. As seen in Figure 4, red could be seen on the 'flag of defiance' - worn in sashes, ribbons, and cockades as a mark of allegiance. The red

Phrygian cap, or 'liberty cap', became a powerful emblem of the revolution, drawing inspiration from Ancient Rome, where formerly enslaved people wore a similar cap to symbolize emancipation (Censer, 2018).



Figure 4. Unknown Artist. (ca. Late 19th Century). 'Members of the Commune'.

French revolutionaries wearing *bonnets rouges*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygian_cap

The period leading up to the French Revolution highlights France's intricate relationship between socioeconomic conditions, political power, and fashion. Fashion trends during the 17th and 18th centuries reflected the dominance of monarchy-driven opulence, where at the turn of the century, a transition towards functional, comfortable clothing prioritised ideals of practicality, liberty, and equality (Laver, 1945). Between the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, menswear underwent significant changes, moving from the flow of ornate and decorative to an ebb of practicality and subdued. The politicisation of clothing, particularly anti-aristocratic sentiments, encouraged the widespread rejection of ornamental clothing and French silhouettes.

Industrial Revolution

Originating in Britain around 1760, the Industrial Revolution influenced the rise of factory systems and supported widespread technological advancement throughout Europe and North America. Coinciding with the 'Age of Enlightenment', this period

marked a transformative period of social change for economies, industries, and societies, especially in textile manufacturing (Allen, 2009).

Until the 18th century, the production of textiles and garments was an intensive process, often involving skilled artisans and manual labour. Textiles were mostly made from natural fibres like wool, linen, silk, and cotton – with most textile production occurring at home or in small workshops. Improvements to the steam engine, advancements in transportation, and innovations in steel manufacturing saw increased technological transitions from hand-production methods to machines (Cameron, 1982, p.378). The mechanisation of weaving and knitting machines significantly advanced manufacturing capabilities and efficiencies, with standardised processes increasing the consistency of outputs and broadening manufacturing towards universal methods of production still used today.

While the Industrial Revolution is typically associated with technological innovation and industrial progress, Regency fashion, influenced by the rise of Neoclassicism in the late 18th century, played a prominent role in shaping upper-class menswear across Europe during this era. Neoclassical ideals reflected a continued reaction against extravagance and ornamentation, seeking inspiration from the classical art, culture, and ideals of Ancient Greece and Rome – an area of significant cultural interest during that period. Neoclassical sentiments encouraged a shift from the flow of bespoke, ornate, baroque-style coats to the ebb of more straightforward, unadorned suits in menswear. Characterised by clean lines and practicality, the revised three-piece suit, with its emphasis on functionality, was tailored or mass-manufactured depending on the class. Neckwear simplified as cravats and stocks evolved into the modern necktie, and the 'sans-culottes' movement favoured long trousers instead of knee breeches.

Responding to the prevalent reduction of expressive menswear, Dandyism, popularised by Beau Brummell and exemplified in Figure 5, emerged in the early 19th century as a distinctive flow of style among upper-class men, countering the industrial austerity of the era. With an emphasis on elegance and flamboyance, Dandy's performed meticulous attention to detail through their wardrobe (Fillin-Yeh, 2001). As the Industrial Revolution blurred traditional class distinctions, dandies asserted individuality and exclusivity through fashion.



Figure 5. Dighton, R. (1805). *Caricature of Beau Brummell* [Watercolour].
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beau_Brummell

Dandies, primarily from the bourgeoisie or aristocracy, used flamboyant attire—such as tailored coats, colourful waistcoats, and intricate cravats—to signify their leisure-class status and detachment from labour. Their extravagant style contrasted with the practical clothing of industrial workers and responded to the democratisation of fashion by emphasising exclusivity. In an era of increasing social mobility, dandies embraced exaggerated styles to maintain clear distinctions from the rising middle-class. Summarised by McDowell,

Clothes were a tool of oppression, a weapon wielded against the poor. They were used to drive home the lesson that the grand were not simply different, they were better, because they were rich. They wore on their backs the proof that they were superior intellectually, morally and socially (McDowell, 1984, p.10).

Manufacturing evolutions grounded fashion design in economic efficiency and consideration for functionality, with workers wearing readymade clothing suited to factory labour (Figure 6), such as sturdy trousers, waistcoats, and caps. Informal

displays of workwear is documented in John George Brown's *The need for functionality* drove the popularisation of practical and affordable fabrics, such as coarse wool and cotton. Wool was particularly favoured as many homes still lacked central heating. Dark colours, like deep browns, blacks, and greys, became popular as they helped mitigate the visible effects of pollution in urban centres.



Figure 6. Unknown Photographer. (ca. 1850-1890). *Workers waiting for pay at the Coalbrookdale Company Works* [Photograph]. The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. <https://www.ironbridge.org.uk/learn/museum-collections/exhibitions-listing/the-daily-grind/wages/>

Social perspectives saw workers being deskilled by the increase in automation transferring what previously had been in their hands and minds to the cold regular motion of, most notably, textile machines (Tomory, 2016, p.153). This period describes the widespread loss of individualisation not only in clothing, but in identity. As described by Grinin (2022):

For a long time a large number of artisans coexisted with machine production by creating a kind of symbiosis of old and new technologies. But the new paradigm gradually became more distinct. Thus, by the mid-1840s there were already only 60,000 hand weavers and 150,000 machine weavers, and 15 years later hand weaving in England almost completely disappeared (Grinin, 2022, p.186).

Fashion during the Industrial Revolution is marked by a blurring of the class system. While the French Revolution heralded the fall of the monarchy and the emergence of the middle-class, the Industrial Revolution reflected a broader societal response to the growing influence of the middle-class (Thomas, 2001). Technological advancements in manufacturing systems led to increased employment opportunities and expanded access to garments for the masses. As trade expanded, fashion styles became

commodified, sparking a global shift in aesthetics. This pattern of mass consumption, manufacturing efficiency, and pervasive clothing trends can be seen as foundational in the modernisation of fashion systems. However, these shifts also signal the departure of decorative and ornamental elements from menswear, as the growing sentiments of the time emphasized the importance of functionality and practicality in male clothing.

The Great Male Renunciation

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed a shift towards workwear, leisurewear and sportswear, reflecting the hardships many faced during the world wars and the Great Depression. Around 1930, men in Western societies began to hypothesise formal frameworks around the effect of clothing over psychological and physiological health, notably the widespread loss of expression and ornament in menswear – a term first described by John Carl as *'The Great Male Renunciation'* (Flügel, 1930). Flügel, a psychologist from University of London, contended that "... since the end of the eighteenth century men had been progressively ignoring brighter, more elaborate, and more varied forms of ornamentation by making their own tailoring the more austere and ascetic of the arts" (Bourke, 1996, p.23). The formation of the 'Men's Dress Reform Party' (MDRP) served as a tactical response to the renunciation. Consisting of psychologists, doctors, theologians and academics from the 'New Health Society' (Burman, 1995, p.276), the MDRP strategised a flow of thinking to improve health and wellbeing in male fashion. While the party's main concerns were the impact of clothes on men's health and hygiene, their mission also aimed to increase the variety and choice in men's clothing. Reasonings for the inception of these ideas are summarised by four key themes: health, capitalism, war and feminism.

Firstly, conditions of health for middle and lower-classes was identifiably unstable during the 18th and 19th centuries. One concern was exposure to increased levels of pollution paired with the popularity of un-washable outerwear, which impacted poor hygiene practices (Carter, 2013). Moreover, the limitation of colour and design in mass-manufactured garments contributed to a depressive state of identity (Bourke, 1996, p.23).

Secondly, capitalistic observations seen in declining public health blamed decreased physical well-being as directly parallel to industrial inefficiencies. Thirdly, the impact of war on the male experience increased the general interest in more aggressive ideals of masculinity. As described by Röper (2005, p.347),

By the early twentieth century, the culture of imperial manliness had spread to other sections of the middle and lower-middle classes, becoming institutionalized through militaristic organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Boys' Brigades. It is estimated that by 1914 over 40 percent of British

adolescents belonged to a youth organization or one kind or another (Röper, 2005, p.347).

Additionally, World War I increased levels of uniformity in clothing for men, emphasised by expanding factory systems of garment production (Shannon, 2004, p.599). Lastly, the rise of feminism, supported by the Suffragette Movement, impacted a certain identity crisis for men. An increasingly dominant female workforce during WWI, heightened the presence of women in political and social spheres, influenced quickly adapting womenswear styles, perceived by some as a threatening ascendancy over stagnant male identities.

These brief summaries describe the breadth of ideas and social considerations that shaped ideologies in the MDRP. A resulting flow of hybrid masculinities was shaped by the availability of varied textiles due to industrial expansion, popularisation of leisure culture due to increases in travel, and emerging middle-classes due to broadened class systems – all encouraging new varieties the male wardrobe (Harvey, 2015, p.802). Though not as historically or socially significant as the French and Industrial Revolutions, the MDRP is discussed as a significant and direct response to the emerging sentiments of fashion for modern man. Although the movement was short-lived, the MDRP partly contributed a lasting acceptance of casual wear in professional settings, increased variety in men's fashion options and the use of clothing as a form of self-expression and identity to influence various subcultures into the 20th century (Barry, 2018, p.638).

Summary

Historically, 17th-century fashion cycles unfolded at a leisurely pace, marked by subtle changes in form and textile over the decades. In contrast to the more rigid and practical working-class attire, aristocrats presented a flamboyant display of extravagance during the Baroque and Rococo periods. The prominent display of ornamental decoration in clothing was supported by the flow of handicraft processes that led to the creation of lavish fabrics, flamboyant designs, and excessive adornment. An introduction of fashion seasons played a significant role in accelerating trends, highlighting the influence of external factors on menswear. The French Revolution marked a growing backlash against these ostentatious styles, with the ideals of rationality and republicanism promoting simplicity in dress and rejecting the excesses of the old regime.

The ebb away from adornment continued into the 19th century, supported by advancements in manufacturing and the expanding middle-class during the Industrial Revolution. Emerging technological processes further accelerated the streamlining of minimalist, functional and utilitarian menswear. During the early 20th century, the Men's Dress Reform Party promoted an influx of new ideas for menswear, notably encouraging rejection of mass-manufactured clothing that limited personal

expression. This movement signalled a modern shift the appearance of gender, and influencing a flow of subcultures across the 20th and 21st centuries and continues today.

In a broader context, this literature review frames a network of social phenomena that have impacted opportunities for expression in contemporary menswear, constructing an overarching pattern displaying support and rejection of adornment and decoration in clothing. The ebb and flow of practical versus expressive fashion cycles represent the interconnectedness of industry and politics over states of art and design and, ultimately, identity.

Simultaneously, the contexts discussed uncover the impact of advancing technologies on design processes. While not a comprehensive study of any one era, it emphasises the dynamic interplay between fashion, craftsmanship, and societal influences, sparking a greater appreciation for the artistry of traditional clothes-making and how these techniques can be adapted to contemporary modes of production.

METHODOLOGY

Utilising digital knitting machinery and software, this research demonstrates a range of program files, textile samples, visualisations, and garments as suggestive responses supporting further discourse on menswear's future potential. The resulting experimentations reflect the beginning of an ongoing series of works intended to enhance the audience's understanding of fashion history through a series of wearable artifacts that discuss symbolic narratives embedded within the colour choice, fabrication, and silhouette.

Technical complexities required in digital knitting, namely machine operation and specialised programming skills, are predominantly accessible in limited industrialised settings and often limit use of such technologies towards streamlined, commercial applications (Hollows, 2006, pp.106-107). One of the primary tasks for knit designers within an industrial setting is prioritising the efficiency of designs by decreasing machine time to increase production outputs. This often negates the creative potential of digital knitting, reserving the technology's crafted possibilities to a limited range of practitioners who have the skills and access to such equipment.

Responding to the range of historical contexts discussed above, this research explores how contemporary knitting technologies can be used to replicate and adapt historical features of menswear. These outcomes merge Baroque aesthetics with industrialised production techniques, underpinned by the liberating philosophical ideals of the MDRP. Described in further detail below, the practice-led pathway is structured in three phases of engagement: *Research, Replicate and Reimagine*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Practice Cycle: Research

Research within the practice cycle begins with formal modes of discovery, including analysis of books, articles, papers, museum artifacts and costume catalogues. These sources provide reputable documentation of cultural heritage or social phenomena, presenting reliable discussions of historical garments alongside contextual positionings. The second phase of research reflected in a series of visual summaries, including the infographic provided (Figure 7), and the ongoing development of informative documents to accompany each *Reimagine* outcome.

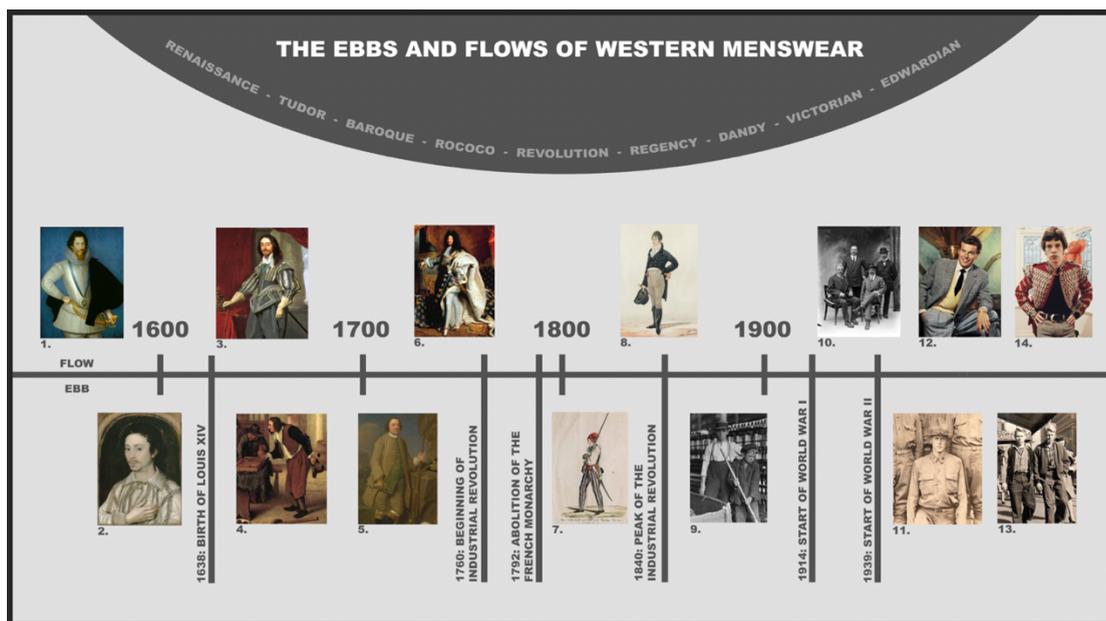


Figure 7. *The Ebbs and Flows of Menswear*, Infographic Diagram, 2024.

Practice Cycle: Replicate and Reimagine

Replicate within the practice cycle involves translating garment details from historically referential imagery and contexts into digital visualisations or knitted outcomes. Replicating traditional textile processes into digital knit isn't always possible, or at least requires adaptations to translate. Therefore, many of these experimentations reflect a novel, knitted interpretation of the reference subjects. Specification sheets record sample data including yarn type, weight, knitting time, programming techniques and construction details. Production details are noted to document comparisons of complexity between samples for future practice experimentation. Alongside this, conceptual annotations provide contextual links between research influences and practice outcomes.

Reimagine consolidates both *Research* and *Replication* into a conceptual interpretation of the discussed historical contexts and technical innovations achieved in this project. The priority of reimagining is to communicate a range of novel and exploratory designs possibilities, highlighting future capacities for digital knitting practices. The first iteration of tests, seen in Figure 8, imitate traditional smocking

techniques through simple ‘floating’ yarn settings.



Figure 8. Replicate: *Smocking*, 2024.

The next set of explorations utilises brightly coloured red merino in three *Replicated* and *Reimagined* outcomes. The chosen colour palette draws on a blend of conceptual influences: opulent red ribbons and velvets depicted in Baroque portraiture and the symbolic red linens associated with resistance during the French Revolution.

This interplay of historical and cultural symbolism is further enriched by a survey of Trompe L’oeil techniques, as illustrated in Figure 9. Trompe L’oeil, a French term meaning “to deceive the eye,” has its roots in Ancient Greece, though it gained prominence during the Renaissance and became a hallmark of still-life painting in the Baroque period. The artistic explorations inherent in Trompe L’oeil, with its visual trickery and layered meanings, echo the inventive spirit of fashion and textile innovation during these eras. The resulting garment (Figure 10) uses basic ‘links’ processes to create illustrative details within the double-jersey structure.



Figure 9. Replicate: *Trompe L'oeil*, 2024.



Figure 10. Reimagine: *Trompe L'oeil*, 2024.

Seen in Figure 11, a replication the *Bonnet Rouge* – a historically significant symbol of the French Revolution - was made using a combination of the SWG-041 accessory machine WholeGarment knitting, and double-jersey structure on the SES-122S.



Figure 11. Replicate: *Bonnet Rouge*, 2024.

The next experiment adapted knit techniques towards the development of slashed sleeves, a prevalent feature of in Baroque garments. Slash knitting required a combination of intarsia carrier arrangements in conjunction with ‘no tuck’ field selections. A range of tests experiment with single and double jersey base structures, different tuck styles, shaping potential, and maximum total number of carriers to replicate slashed sleeve techniques (Figure 13).

The reimagined slash outcome (Figure 14) uses a combination of Shima Seiki’s SWG-041 Accessory Machine to create tubular straps, and the SES-122S to create knit-to-shape panels with intarsia slashes. Conceptually, this piece was inspired by a combination of ribbons and slashes to reflect aspects of aristocratic dress, and a loose silhouette with revolutionary red to reflect working-class garment references. The straps offer added functionality, allowing for the wearer to customise placement and gather portions of the garment to adjust fit.

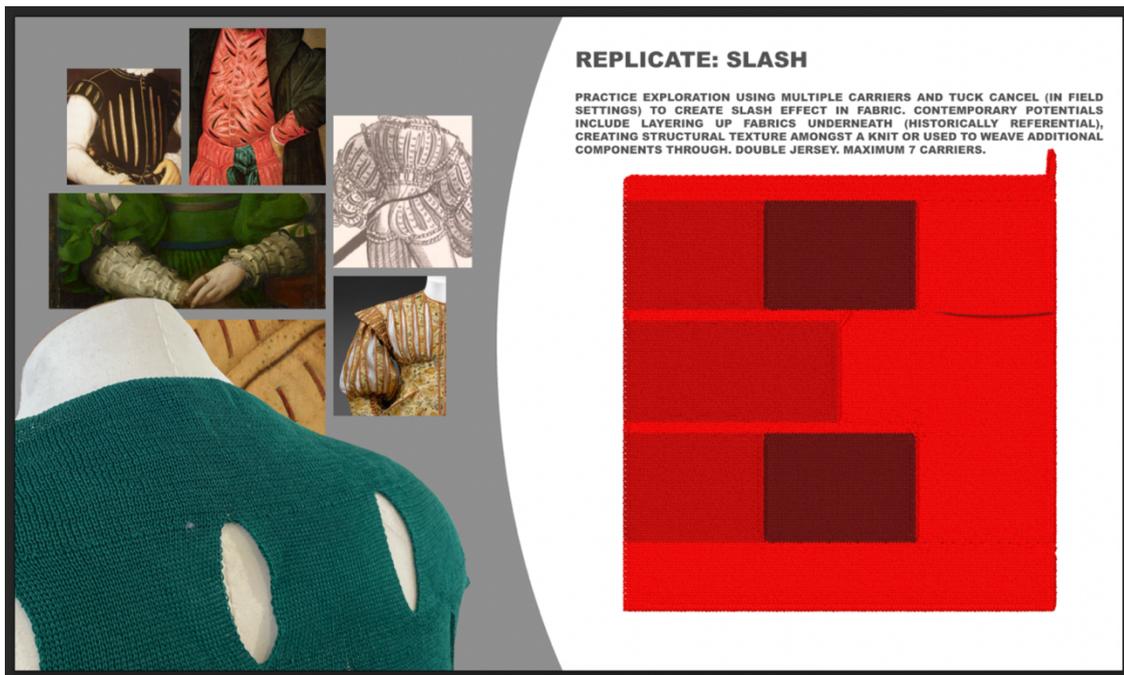


Figure 12. Replicate: *Slash*, 2024.

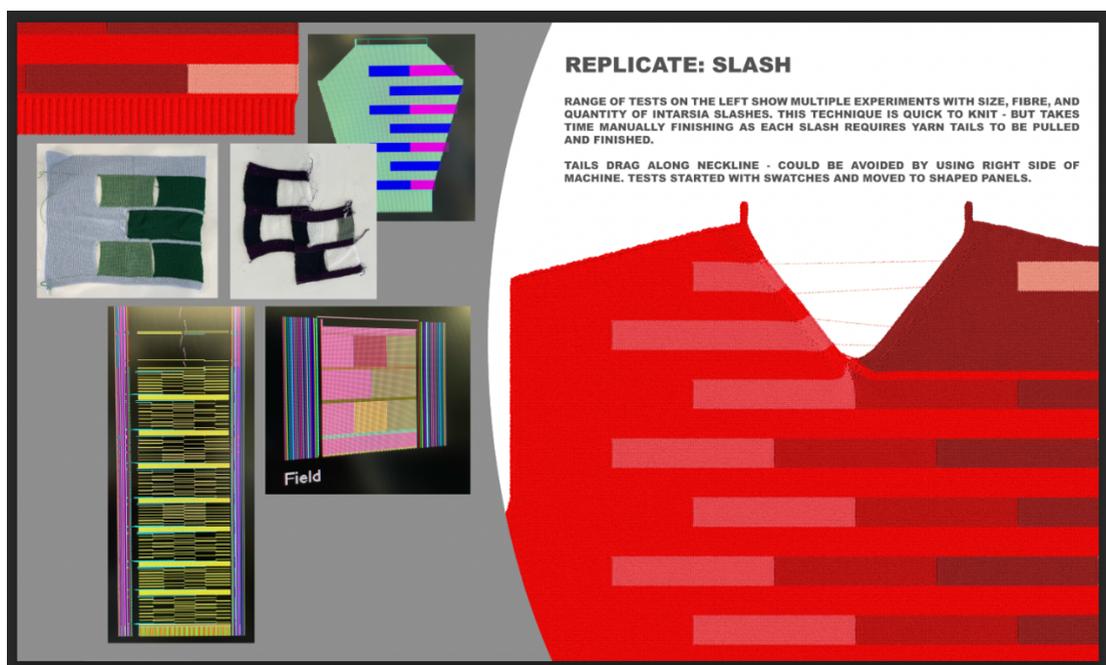


Figure 13. Replicate: *Slash*, Experimentation Using Intarsia and 'No Tuck' On Field.



Figure 14. Reimagine: *Slash*, 2024.

The next series of tests explore the structural and shaping potential of knitwear, drawing inspiration from the intricate detailing of Cavalier textiles from the Baroque era, particularly in hems and necklines. This experimentation focuses on replicating the lace-making capabilities of knitting technology (Figure 15).

By utilising a range of basic knitted stitch structures—such as tuck and transfer stitches to achieve classic lace effects (Figure 16), and move and split stitches to form subtle lace details (Figure 17)—the program files enable a nuanced exploration of decorative possibilities. Programming details reveal variations in stitch complexity and machine efficiency, influenced by transfer requirements. While these techniques do not achieve the intricacy of true lace, the imitative results showcase significant decorative potential, offering a modern interpretation of traditional lace aesthetics.

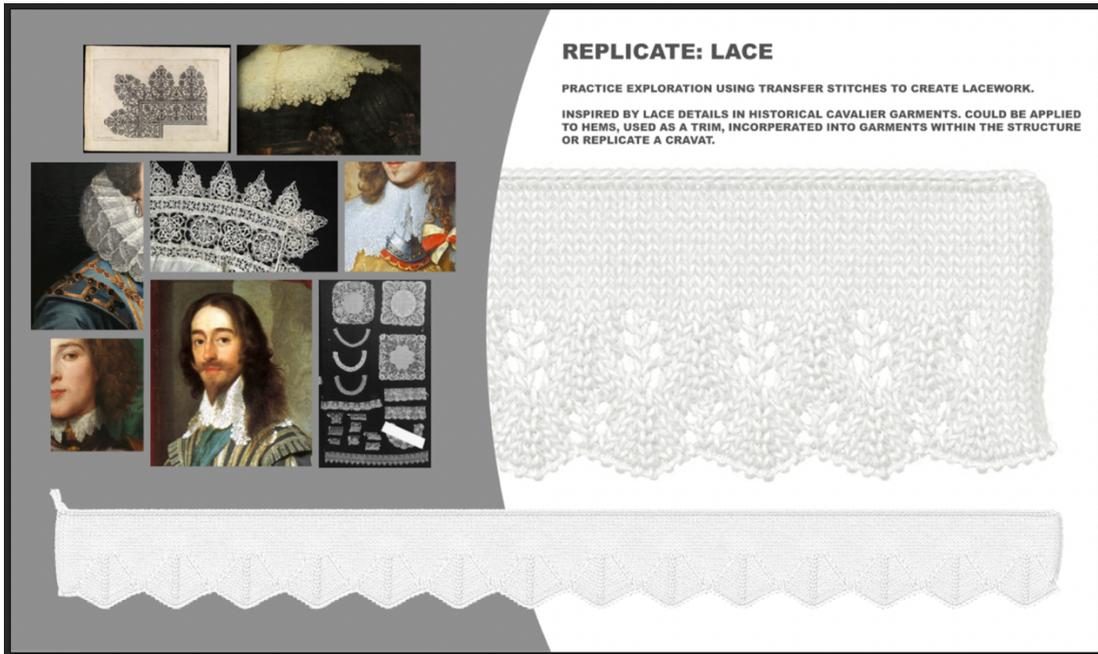


Figure 15. Replicate: *Lace*, 2024.

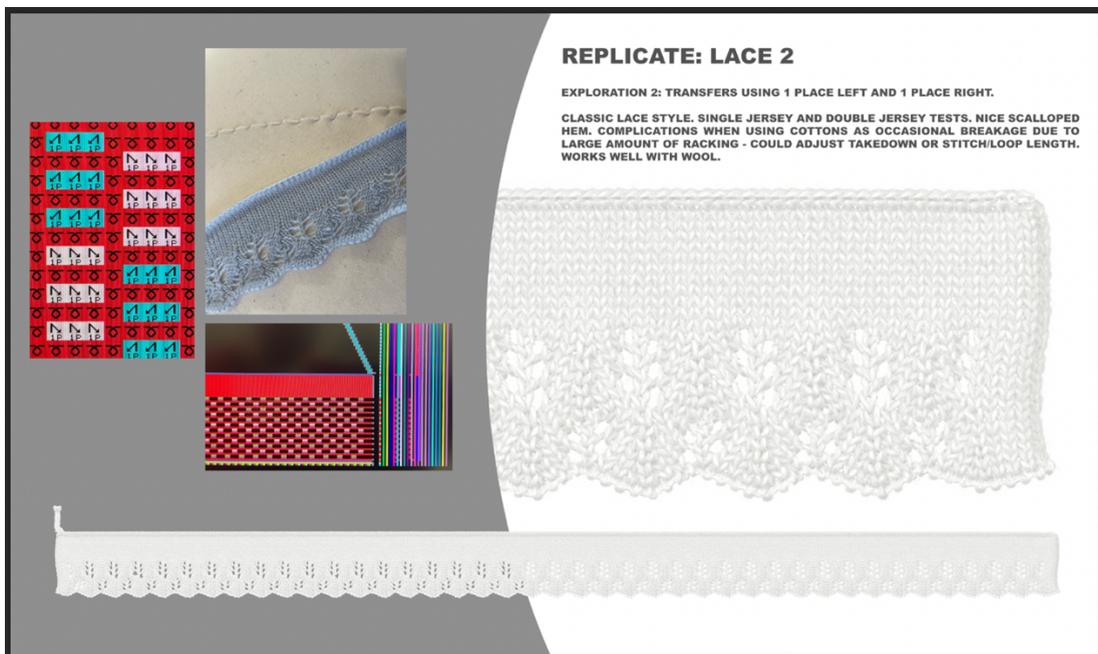


Figure 16. Replicate: *Lace*, Experimentation Showcasing 'Transfer' Stiches, 2024.



Figure 17. Replicate: *Lace*, Experimentation Showcasing ‘Move’ and ‘Split’ Stitches, 2024.

The reimagined lace outcome, seen in Figure 18, combines lace trims with a double jersey box-shaped silhouette – inspired by 16th and 17th century doublets. Charcoal coloured yarn was chosen to deviate from traditional white lace. The piece was constructed by linking fourteen individually knitted lace trims within knit-to-shape panels. This outcome connects to contemporary menswear through subtle fabric and silhouette selections alongside traditional textural details honouring historical design components.



Figure 18. Reimagine: *Lace*, 2024.

CONCLUSION

The discussions and outcomes of this research mark the beginning of an inquiry into emulating traditional textiles within digital knitting practices. The extensive historical overview presented in the literature review summarises the ebbs and flows of decorative menswear, offering introductory discussions of a variety of topics that warrant further analysis and exploration.

Additionally, a broad analysis of historical technological advancements highlight the significance contemporary manufacturing capabilities have for future material industries. This text establishes significant connections between historical movements, particularly by acknowledging the patterns through which social events influence perspectives on clothing. Recognising key shifts in historical dress connects seemingly opposing aesthetic constructs, presenting them as part of an observable series of events—a valuable framework for teaching fashion histories.

The research outcomes propose a conceptual approach to interpreting fashion histories, balancing *Research, Replication, and Reimagining* to rekindle an appreciation for the sartorial significance of ornamental aesthetics. The making-methods employed advocate for a shift towards fashion systems operating at a more thoughtful and sustainable pace. This approach pays homage to historical influences while leveraging contemporary technologies and manufacturing processes, offering new potentials for menswear that harmonise the artisanal qualities of handcrafting with the efficiency of modern machinery.

REFERENCES

Assailly, G. d' (1968). *Ages of Elegance: Five Thousand Years of Fashion and Frivolity*. Paris: Hachette.

Barry, B. (2018). '(RE)FASHIONING MASCULINITY: Social Identity and Context in Men's Hybrid Masculinities through Dress', *Gender and Society*, 32(5), pp.638–662. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26967021>

Berg, M. (2007). 'Goods from the East', *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199215287.003.0002> [Accessed 3 Oct. 2011].

Bendall, S. 2018. Back to Basics: The Smock in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. *Material Culture*, Sarah A. Bendall: *Dress and Fashion History*. Available at: <https://sarahabendall.com/2018/08/15/back-to-basics-the-smock-in-the-late-sixteenth-early-seventeenth-century/>

Bourke, J. (1996). 'The Great Male Renunciation: Men's Dress Reform in Inter-war Britain', *Journal of Design History*, 9(1), pp.23-33.

Burman, B. (1995). 'Better and Brighter Clothes: The Men's Dress Reform Party, 1929-1940', *Journal of Design History*, 8(4), pp.275-290. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1316022>

Cameron, R. (1982). 'The Industrial Revolution: A Misnomer', *The History Teacher*, 15(3), pp.377-384. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/493817>

Carter, S. (2013). 'Fashion, Male Beauty and the Men's Dress Reform Party', *Cost of Living*, 8 Feb. Available at: <https://www.cost-of-living.net/fashion-male-beauty-and-the-mens-dress-reform-party/>

Craik, J. (1993). *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*. London: Routledge, pp.10.

Dighton, R. (1805). *Caricature of Beau Brummell* [Watercolour]. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beau_Brummell

Doyle, W. (2001). *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flügel, J.C. (1930). *The Psychology of Clothes*. London, pp.111.

Grim, S. H. (1774). 'Is this my Daughter Ann?' [Watercolour Print]. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Available at: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1081204001>

Harvey, K. (2015). 'Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 54(4), pp. 797-821. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24702175>

Hine, L.W. (1908) *Four Workers, Glass Factory, West Virginia* [Gelatin silver print]. The J. Paul Getty Museum Collection. Available at: <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/104HKB>

Hollander, M. (2019). Fashioning The Baroque Male. In: J.D. Lyons, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Baroque*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.119-148.

Hollows, J. (2006). 'Can I Go Home Yet?', in Joanne Hollows and Rachel Mosley (eds.), *Feminism in Popular Culture*, pp.106-107. Berg.

- Laver, J. (1945). *Taste and Fashion: From the French Revolution to the Present Day*. London: George G. Harrap & Co.
- Le Nain, A. (ca. 1640-48). *A Peasant Family* [Oil on Copper]. The Metropolitan Museum. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438779>
- Lesso, R. (2020). 'Louis XIV: King of High Fashion', *The Thread, The Fashion Store*. Available at: <https://blog.fabrics-store.com/2020/08/25/louis-xiv-king-of-high-fashion>
- Lillrank, P. (2012). 'Bourgeois Virtues: The Aristocrat, the Ascetic, the Peasant, and the Bourgeoisie', *Centre for European Studies*, p.6. Available at: https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/bourgeois_virtues.pdf
- Mansel, P. (2006). *Louis XIV: The Power and the Glory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p.368.
- McCall, T. (2018). 'Materials for Renaissance Fashion', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70(4), pp.1449–1464. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/695346>
- McDowell, C. (1998). *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion*. London: Frederick Muller.
- Olah, A. (2021). 'Founder's Letter: Fashion – How Louis XIV brought style', *Kingpins Show*. Available at: <https://kingpinsshow.com/founders-letter-fashion-how-louis-xiv-brought-style/>
- Rashad, R.M. (2023). 'Transformation Fashion Style used in innovating contemporary Baroque styled fashion', *International Design Journal*, 13(5), pp.129–138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21608/idj.2023.312395>
- Rigaud, H. (ca. 1701). *Portrait of Louis XIV* [Oil on Canvas]. The J. Paul Getty Museum Collection. Available at: <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103RA8>
- Röper, M. (2005). 'Between Manliness and Masculinity: The "War Generation" and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914–1950', *Journal of British Studies*, 44(2), pp.343–362. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/427130>
- Shannon, B. (2004). 'Refashioning Men: Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain, 1860-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 46(4), pp.597–630. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3829920>
- Thomas, P.W. (). 'Fashion History: The Industrial Revolution and Fashion', *Fashion-*

Era. Available at: <https://fashion-era.com/fashion-history/industrial-revolution-fashion> [Accessed 11 Nov. 2024].

Tilburg, P. (2019). ““They are nothing but birdbrains!”: The Midinette on Strike, 1901–1919’, *Working Girls: Sex, Taste, and Reform in the Parisian Garment Trades*, pp.156. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198841173.003.0005>[Accessed 18 Nov. 2024].

Unknown Artist. (ca. Late 19th Century). ‘*Members of the Commune*’ [Print]. French Revolutionaries wearing *bonnets rouges*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygian_cap

Unknown Photographer. (ca. 1850-1890). *Workers waiting for pay at the Coalbrookdale Company Works* [Photograph]. The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. Available at: <https://www.ironbridge.org.uk/learn/museum-collections/exhibitions-listing/the-daily-grind/wages/>

Werlin, K. (2011). ‘The Fashion Historian: Ruffs’, *The Fashion Historian*. Available at: <http://www.thefashionhistorian.com/2011/11/ruffs.html> [Accessed 22 May 2024].